Legal Safeguards for a Supportive Workplace Environment: The role of Pakistan Anti-Harassment Laws in Supporting Workplace Environment and Preventing Workplace Harassment

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Abstract: This study determined how workplace harassment can influence supportive workplace harassment, directly and indirectly, using Anti- harassment laws as a mediating variable. Workplace harassment with multiple dimensions (Physical harassment, sexual harassment, verbal conduct, and non-verbal conduct) was used in this study. We used a questionnaire survey approach to evaluate the data. A total of 53 items were used in the questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. The data were collected from small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) based in Pakistan. The authors distributed 600 questionnaires among targeted employees (senior managers, middle-level managers, and supportive staff) and received 417 filled questionnaires, among which six were incomplete. So, the completed sample size of the research was 411, and the overall response rate was 69%. To estimate the proposed relationships in the research model, we used partial least-squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM 3.2). The outcomes of this study indicate that for direct and indirect relationships, workplace harassment negatively influences a supportive workplace environment. Additionally, the study shows a negative relationship between WH and AHL. Moreover, the outcomes of this study also show that anti-harassment laws positively impacts and helps to create a supportive workplace environment. The study concludes with a discussion, limitations, and future research directions.

Keywords: Workplace harassment, Supportive workplace environment, Pakistan Anti-harassment law, Anti-harassment Policy

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Background of the Study

Pakistan has experienced dramatic industrialization, urbanization, and economic growth in the last three decades. Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in the Pakistani economy (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020). Rural-to-urban migrants consist of the majority of the employees in SMEs who migrate from less developed areas to more developed areas in Pakistan (Shafi, Liu, & Ren, 2020). Compared to large enterprises, SMEs tend to be less regulated in workplace harassment (WH) policies to avoid workplace voidances. In addition, employees in SMEs usually do not have anti-harassment policies and laws that affect the workplace environment in small and medium-sized enterprises (Luo et al., 2008). So, in the less developed area of Pakistan still, workplace harassment policies and anti-harassment laws are not applied properly.

In Pakistani society, sexual harassment was not even identified as an issue and the acceptance for this behavior is still very high by both men and women due to the socialization of living in a patriarchal society. In 2001, an Alliance against Sexual Harassment (AASHA) was formed of like-minded organizations that identified it as an issue and decided to find a solution for it. In 2002, AASHA, together with the Government of Pakistan, started working on developing a policy framework and working closely with the ILO and senior Government officials to address the issue of Sexual Harassment. AASHA later introduced the Policy to the private sector with the agreement of the Government. This act protects both genders and is enforced in the whole of Pakistan.

Unfortunately, there remains a lack of understanding and awareness of anti-harassment laws, which can help to create a supportive and safe workplace environment. The influence of workplace harassment on a supportive workplace environment (SWE) has been debated in previous studies (Anjum, Ming, Siddiqi, & Rasool, 2018; Namie, 2007; Scott, 2018).

However, insights into the anti-harassment laws are still not discussed in the literature. Workplace harassment and stressful events in different aspects of normal life (work, friends, and family) impose a high psychological burden, which may negatively affect the workplace environment. Although some individuals rise to the challenges of such stresses, others try to escape from them. In the current era, many people who experience daily harassment are designed to endure workplace violence. This study addressed the interventional effects of anti-harassment laws) between workplace harassment on a supportive workplace environment to determine implications for academicians and practitioners.

Previous studies have shown that workplace harassment damage the supportive workplace environment. This problem requires more investigation and the attention of academicians to identify the possible causes of workplace harassment for stakeholders and organizations (Daniels, Watson, & Gedikli, 2017; Herr et al., 2018). Individuals who are associated with the SMEs of Pakistan face workplace harassment that affects the workplace environment. Previously, few researchers investigated the direct relationship between workplace harassment and a supportive workplace environment. However, the relationship between workplace harassment, anti-harassment laws, and a supportive workplace environment is still unexplored. In particular, an anti-harassment law as an intervening construct still needs to be researched. Many workers face workplace harassment, but they do not disclose their stress

due to fear of discrimination, which reduces work motivation among SMEs workers, negatively affecting the supportive workplace environment (Evans-Lacko & Knapp, 2018). So, this investigation is helpful for the Small and medium-sized enterprises of Pakistan to reduce workplace harassment to bring a supportive workplace environment.

B. Research Questions

Based on the insights about the workplace harassment, anti-harassment laws and supportive workplace environment in the above literature, this study proposes are the following research questions:

RQ1. How does workplace harassment affect the supportive workplace environment?

RQ1. How anti-harassment laws affect the supportive workplace environment?

RQ2. How anti-harassment laws mediate the relationship between workplace harassment and a supportive workplace environment?

C. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study to explore the relationship between workplace harassment from a legal, compliance, and a supportive workplace environment, based on the resource-based view theory, this study analyzed a model with anti-harassment laws variable between the relationship of workplace harassment and supportive workplace environment. Research components for this study made use of questions that addressed state and organizational efforts related to improving work environment within organizations. Based on the above discussion, the objective of the research is summaries below:

I. To understand the divisions of workplace harassment such as physical harassment, sexual harassment, verbal conduct, and non-verbal conducts
II. To understand the impact of workplace harassment and a supportive workplace environment.
III. To explicate the intervening effects of anti-harassment laws between workplace harassment and supportive workplace environment.

D. Structure of the Paper

The paper is sub-divided into seven chapters. Chapter one introduces the research, provides the rationale for the research, and outlines the sequence of the paper. The introductory part of Chapter one's attempt is made for a brief elaboration of the relationship between the supportive workplace environment, anti-harassment laws, and workplace harassment. Chapter two presents a literature review of the study. This chapter comprehensively elaborates the concept of workplace harassment such as physical harassment, sexual harassment, verbal conduct, and non-verbal conduct. Moreover, this chapter explains the concepts of a supportive workplace environment and anti-harassment laws. Chapter three explains the conceptual framework of the study as well as explains the hypotheses of this research. Chapter four express the research methods used in this study. Chapter five explains the research and analysis. In this chapter, the researcher uses the partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM 3.2) and tests the direct and indirect effects. Chapter six comprehensively explains the discussion of this study. Chapter seven concludes the study with a brief practical implication, limitations, and future research directions.

II. Literature Review

Over the last decade, there has been a growing awareness worldwide of the existence and extent of harassment in the workplace (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Governments, employers' and workers' organizations in industrialized and developing countries have introduced a range of laws, policies, and procedures to prevent and combat it. Harassment is a hazard encountered in workplaces across the world that reduces the quality of working life, jeopardizes the wellbeing of women and men, undermines gender equality, and imposes costs on firms and organizations. In this study, the author has identified the main variety of workplace harassment that is creating barriers among the worker's quality of life. Moreover, the author also identifies the variety of laws that control workplace harassment and provide a happy and supportive workplace environment among the SMEs of Pakistan.

A. Workplace Harassment

Workplace harassment is a form of employment discrimination that violates several federal and state laws. Sexual harassment is persistent, unwanted sexual advances, verbal abuse, and/or demands for sexual favors (Berdahl & Moore, 2006). Behavior becomes illegal when enduring the harassment is a condition of continued employment and creates a hostile or intimidating environment. If an employer has more than a handful of employees, its likely harassment will be a problem. This study has classified workplace harassment into four categories i.e., physical harassment, sexual harassment, verbal conduct, and non-verbal conduct.

a) Physical Harassment

Physical harassment is an act where someone inappropriately touches you against your will. Physical harassment in the workplace is also known as workplace violence (Henning et al., 2017). Physical harassment behavior intimidates, embarrasses, threatens, and makes the victim uncomfortable. The most common forms related to physical harassment include:

- Sexual assault or abuse or sexual rape
- Inappropriately touching or grabbing someone, e.g. touching someone's breast intentionally
- Using intimidating gestures
- Deliberately brushing or rubbing your body against someone
- Blocking another employee's movements
- Kissing or hugging someone inappropriately
- Unwelcome touching of another person's hair, clothes, or body

Under Section 354A of the Pakistan Penal Code (1860), a person who assaults a woman, uses physical force against her, or strips her of her clothes for the public to see, shall be liable. The accused may be given a death sentence or imprisoned for life.

b) Sexual Harassment

Women have long been exposed to workplace harassment which involves the conduct of a sexual nature or is premised on the sex of the victim. However, these kinds of behavior were not given a name until the 1970s, when women in the United States demanded that sexual harassment be recognized as sex discrimination under the federal anti-discrimination legislation (Henning et al., 2017).

The designation "sexual harassment" has since been adopted by women in many other countries who have used it to characterize their experiences, ensure recognition of these forms of conduct and seek to have them prevented. During the last two decades, legislation, court decisions, awareness-raising initiatives, and workplace programs and policies have recognized and responded to the problem. In the last decade, in particular, advances have been made in both industrialized and developing countries, including in those in which there had previously been little public recognition of the problem. At the international level too, sexual harassment has been recognized and addressed by a number of bodies, including the International Labour Organization (Gale, Mordukhovich, Newlan, & McNeely, 2019). Within the European Union, concern over sexual harassment in the workplace was first expressed in 1986, when it was addressed in the European Parliament's Resolution on violence against women (Inoguchi & Le, 2020). The following year, a European Commission report concluded that none of the then 12 Member States had adequate legal mechanisms in place to combat harassment and called for an EU Directive (Roggeband, 2021). However, the most significant EU initiative was the 1991 Commission Recommendation and its accompanying Code of Practice. The recommendation on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work called upon the Member States to promote awareness of sexual harassment and implement the measures outlined in the Code of Practice (Węziak-Białowolska, Białowolski, & McNeely, 2020). Its definition of sexual harassment, which describes it as "unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work", has been highly influential across the many Member States. In 1996, the Commission issued a second report on national legislation on sexual harassment, which concluded that the Recommendation and Code of Practice had not initiated sufficient progress.

Views on sexual harassment have evolved since it was a widely tolerated aspect of working life, often considered an occupational hazard that women should expect to endure. The influx of large numbers of women into the paid labor force over the last 20 years and their increasing involvement in worker's organizations and women's advocacy groups have heightened awareness of the extent and destructive consequences of sexual harassment. Women have exposed it as offensive and damaging, redefining the behavior. Below mentioned two points explained if workplace harassment exists in the organization, then what will happen with the victims of sexual harassment?

First, Victims of sexual harassment often suffer emotional and psychological harm, including stress, depression, and anxiety. They often experience decreased confidence and self-esteem. Physical health problems may arise, such as loss of sleep and appetite, weight fluctuations, nausea, and headaches (Sasaki, Kuroda, Tsuno, & Kawakami, 2020). Second, sexual harassment can also wreak havoc on a victim's job performance and career trajectory. Fear and decreased confidence can cause some people to withdraw from the workplace and disengage from co-workers. They are more likely to be tardy, absent, distracted, and neglect duties. If victims of sexual harassment report the harassment, they may suffer advancement setbacks such as being passed over for promotions, being left out of key meetings, retaliation, and being labeled a troublemaker. Financial problems like lost wages and unpaid leave are also possible (Cortina & Areguin, 2021).

c) Verbal Conduct

It is a type of harassment that makes employees feel less comfortable, humiliated, threatened and intimidated. Most of the time, people find it challenging to identify verbal harassment because of different reactions from people (Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2020). The most common forms of verbal harassment include:

Pakistan Penal Code (1860) Section 354A: A person who does something that is considered indecent and vulgar, including singing or reciting a song with vulgar lyrics, shall be imprisoned for three months or may be given a fine or be ordered to do both.

- Making inappropriate jokes, remarks, teasing, or asking sexually related questions
- Asking someone to go out with you, unwelcome sexual advances, and sexual favors
- Inquiring about the sexual preference or history of a colleague at the workplace
- Gossiping about someone and spreading lies about them
- Using abusive language and offensive name-calling
- Commenting negatively about a person's clothing, body or personal behavior
- Making inappropriate sounds such as kissing sounds, whistling or smacking lips
- Sending someone sexual emails, notes or letters
- Verbal attacks, for instance, arguing with someone using threatening, discriminatory, or demeaning words
- Embarrassing someone in front of people, for example, employer shouting and yelling at an employee over poor performance

It is also noted that the law does not consider all verbal harassment forms illegal unless it appears unlawful under the rule of law. In instances when verbal abuse is not illegal, the victim can talk to the abuser and explain how the words make them uncomfortable.

d) Non-verbal Conduct

Visual harassment is a situation where the individual exposes themselves to another person without the consent of the victim, and the act affects their performance or attitude (Hastie, 2020). Examples of visual harassment include:

- Exposing of private parts
- Sending sexual images or videos to another person. For instance, sending pornographic videos to another person through a social website without informing the person
- Unwelcome gestures to another person
- Staring at someone else's body offensively and making the person feel uncomfortable
- Placing a poster with information related to sexual behaviors
- Exposing someone else to offensive pictures or images without their consent
- Displaying nasty messages or content from a website, book, or magazine

Under **Pakistan Penal Code (1860) Section 509:** If a person insults a woman regarding her modesty, whether through gestures or words, the perpetrator can be charged with three years of imprisonment, or with a fine or both.

B. Anti-Harassment Laws

Although sexual harassment at work has been legally prohibited in some countries for more than two decades until fairly recently, only a few jurisdictions have enacted legislation on this subject. Since the mid-1990s, however, the number of countries in which laws have been enacted has more than doubled. During this period, legislative provisions on sexual harassment have been enacted and existing provisions interpreted to combat harassment in countries in all regions (Boutros, 2018). It is also apparent that legal approaches to tackling sexual harassment have become increasingly sophisticated as provisions on definitions, procedures, policies, liability, remedies, and sanctions have been designed to respond to the increasing awareness of the nature and extent of sexual harassment and to draw on the experience of the jurisdictions which have addressed it.

C. Sexual harassment law

Most of the jurisdictions in which sexual harassment is directly prohibited include a definition in their legislation. In others, the legislation states that sexual harassment is prohibited, leaving the decision-making bodies to clarify the kinds of actions covered and the circumstances in which they will be prohibited (Hörnle, 2017). This approach threatens uncertainty while the parameters of the definition are established. In those legal systems in which definitions form part of the legislation, some are relatively succinct. In contrast, some statutory definitions are more detailed. The Israeli Prevention of Sexual Harassment Law, for example, sets out a list of six different kinds of behavior covered by the Act. In jurisdictions in which the prohibition of sexual harassment is a judicial innovation, contrasting approaches have been taken to define it. In India, the Supreme Court has issued a set of detailed guidelines on measures that must be adopted by employers to prevent sexual harassment, which include an extensive definition (Williams et al., 2019). In other jurisdictions, the courts have established the parameters of sexual harassment on a case-by-case basis.

Recent years have witnessed a trend towards the introduction of specific measures on sexual harassment. Countries have enacted national-level legislation devoted to sexual harassment, including Belize, Costa Rica, Israel, and the Philippines (Taylor, Maitra, Mumford, & Liu, 2020). Some are hybrid laws that establish legislative regimes for the prohibition of sexual harassment through provisions drawing on elements from different branches of the law. The Philippines Anti-Sexual Harassment Act, for example, allows victims of sexual harassment the option of filing a criminal complaint, making an administrative complaint within the workplace, or bringing a civil case for damages.

The legal definition of sexual harassment in Pakistan: Sexual harassment includes such unwelcome sexually determined behavior (whether directly or by implication) as:

- Physical contact and advances
- A demand or request for sexual favors
- Sexually colored remarks
- Showing pornography
- Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

D. Comparative analysis and Constitutional Safeguards of Pakistan, Indian and USA

Specific Indian-Pakistani Differences Constitutional Safeguards Since the dawn of independence from colonial rule, India and Pakistan has been gender sensitizing their laws. Unlike its counterpart, India succeeded in making constitutional arrangements in 1950. On the contrary, being riddled with numerous gigantic problems as a nascent state, Pakistan had to face constitutional crises till 1956. However, in its first regular constitution, Pakistan had ensured sufficient constitutional guarantees to the women. Especially, protections against discrimination in service on the basis of sex and non-discrimination in respect of access to public places were the salient feature of the said constitution. So much so the state was empowered to enact special laws for the uplift of women in Pakistan. The said constitution could not gain ground any longer and after remaining of the constitutional horizon for less than a decade, it was replaced by the constitution of 1962. At the outset, no mention of fundamental rights was made in the said constitution. However, as a result of the first constitutional amendment, fundamental rights were granted to the citizens. Like its predecessor, the constitution of 1962 ensured women's fundamental rights like nondiscrimination in access to public places on the basis of sex). Similarly, discrimination in services on the basis of sex was outlawed. After remaining in force for a little more than a decade, the said constitution was replaced by the Constitution of 1973, which, unlike its predecessors, contained exhaustive provisions pertaining to the wellbeing of women. The hall mark of the extant constitution is that besides containing fundamental rights as to the protection of women in Pakistan, it also provides guidelines (under the title of principles of Policy), to the state for the promulgation of future laws relating to women.

American Scenario:

Discrimination and harassment are prohibited in the workplace in the United States, Canada, and several European Union Member States, according to federal and state legislation. As a consequence, companies are obligated by law to take steps to prevent and handle workplace harassment complaints. In the case that an employer fails to take reasonable efforts to prevent and resolve workplace harassment, the employer may be held accountable.

For the statement of purpose to be effective, it must indicate a genuine commitment on the part of all parties involved to combat workplace sexual harassment. As a result, written policies are often created to protect the interests of the firm. In addition to stating that harassment will not be permitted, human resource rules outline the procedures to be followed in the event that it happens. Additionally, anti-harassment policies should outline a specific course of action that workers may follow if they are sexually harassed at work. A harassment policy does not guarantee that no complaints will be filed against the company. All employees should get anti-harassment training, which may assist in avoiding harassment and encourage those who are being harassed to come forward, allowing the situation to be resolved as promptly and efficiently as possible. Several courts in the United States have ruled that employers that respond quickly and effectively to complaints of harassment are not liable for the same amount, if any, as those who do not respond at all.

E. Pakistan Harassment Act 2010

Harassment at the workplace has been one of the major contributing factors that impede women from joining the workforce in Pakistan. The Protection against harassment of women at the Workplace Act 2010 (Mushir Alam, J- Nadia Naz v), provides legal protection to women against harassment at the workplace and reforms the existing legislation regarding women's right to work in Pakistan. This legislative review discusses the scope of the Act with regard to the international obligations of Pakistan. The review also analyses the interpretation of the Act by the superior courts by examining the reported case law on the subject. Besides, it highlights the shortcomings of the Act and makes recommendations for its improvement.

This Act may be called the Protection against harassment of women at the Workplace Act, 2010. This act define harassment– any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature or sexually demeaning attitudes, causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidation, hostile or offensive work environment, or the attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply to such a request or is made a condition for employment (Khan & Ahmed, 2016).

This act also defines workplace–the place of work or the premises where an organization or employer operates and includes building, factory, open area or a larger geographical area where the activities of the organization or of the employer are carried out and including any situation that is linked to official work or official activity outside the office (Khan & Ahmed, 2016).

F. Supportive Workplace Environment

A supportive work environment is crucial to creating a productive organization and increasing employee wellbeing (Balch & Copeland, 2007). They are places where employees can openly come to their managers with their concerns, knowing their leaders care about the problems they face. In a supportive work environment, managers and supervisors sincerely recognize and appreciate hard work — but beyond that, they are dedicated to cultivating growth (Schettler, 2021). The supportive workplace environments help reduce turnover and increase employee satisfaction (Shrivastava & Singh, 2021). Employees are the backbones of any organization, but they are ignored in many sectors. The worker's supportive environment can improve their work performance, whereas workplace harassment negatively affects the supportive workplace environment (Koser, Rasool, & Samma, 2018; Rasool, Maqbool, Samma, Zhao, & Anjum, 2019).

III. Three Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

A. Workplace Harassment and Supportive Workplace Environment

Previous studies identify workplace harassment as a form of employment discrimination or unfair practices that damages the integrity of the employees and makes him/her suffer any form of physical, emotional or verbal distress (Cortina, L. M., Swan, S., Fitzgerald, L. F., & Waldo, C. 1998). The act is said to be quite unwelcoming and places a negative influence not only on the organizational culture but also builds a sense of negativity and hatred among the workers. The idea is also associated with creating increased demotivation, less morale, and increased employee turnover that adversely impacts organizational success. Meanwhile, the loss of a competent and highly-skilled workforce is too evident where reduced productivity and work engagement also influenced. Corporate ethics and compliance that must be addressed as an important part of the organizational culture are thought to reduce the workplace harassment practices that take place in every industry and company irrespective of its belonging to any profession or sector (Jessica L. Ford and Sonia R. Ivancic). The different types of harassment studied are related to age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation. Moreover, some have associated it with unethical behaviors of asking for sexual favors in the offensive work environment, hostile acts, and abuse of power to practice psychological harassment. In this case, building up a supportive work environment will help mitigate the challenges due to the harassment and assure the well-being of employees through practicing strict policies and legislation. Setting up a workplace that fosters a healthy attitude and strengthens the capabilities by promoting open communication and handling complaints in a true and fair sense can enhance organizational practices to become more trustworthy. (Willness, C. R., Steel, P., & Lee, K. 2007).

Physical Harassment is presented as the most common type of workplace harassment or violence faced by employees and indicated that this is mostly faced by women working in any company where the inappropriate touching or behaviors of intimacy, embarrassing or threatening the individuals comes under this sort of violence (M. Sandy Hershcovis, Sharon K. Parker and Tara C. Reich 2010). They presented some of the most common types of physical harassment as sexual assault or grabbing or touching someone in a disgraceful manner to, using unethical gestures or deliberately touching someone's' body while blocking the movement of their employees or unwelcoming touch practiced. According to the legislative authorities of Pakistan, a law is passed to support the women that face harassment at their workplace termed as The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act was built to support the workplace environment and assure them a sound and secure workplace. A supportive work environment that practices training sessions as well conduct strict regulatory checks can aid in reducing such incidents from happening again. While on the other it, the incidence ratio becomes high, this ultimately impacts adversely.

They were experiencing sexual harassment at the workplace impact both the capabilities of the individual as well as results in the loss of talented individuals that work diligently. De Coster, Estes, and Mueller (1999) identify sexual harassment as negatively impacting the supportive workplace that fosters growth, encouragement, and collaborative teamwork. In contradiction to this, sending and sharing of sexually inappropriate images as well as videos to, making in appropriate gestures and inappropriate touching to calling offensive names interrupts the success of the organization. Therefore, making it difficult for the employee to work in organizations to accomplish their goals as they are majorly busy in dealing with internal issues and problems. Thus, the next hypothesis is designed as sexual harassment negatively impacting the idea of a supportive workplace environment.

One of the most common types of abuse faced by the employees irrespective of their gender or age is the verbal abuse that may be based on their physical appearance, their religion, their belief, and their ideas towards life or working styles. Apart from this, (Waite 2021, Sweet PL) diagnosed that workplace abuse comes as blaming, shouting, gas lighting, and passing judgments over the person through threatening them and abusing them. The practices make the environment a difficult place to carry on the workplace practices

while laying a question mark on the team efforts as well as team dynamics. Thus, based on the above discussion, we proposed the below-mentioned hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Workplace harassment negatively impact on the supportive workplace environment

B. Workplace Harassment and Anti-Harassment Law

The practices of physical harassment where the policies of anti-harassment laws are already in place by the organization negatively impact their lawful presence. Moreover, it shows the inability and ineffectiveness of the human resource management and the failure of their policies that despite of the presence of the law, the physical harassment incidence takes place. Thus, Physical harassment negatively impacts the anti-harassment law (act 2010). At the same time, sexual harassment is associated with transferring of capable and talented candidates to emotional distress as well as disciplinary damages to the organization. The need for time for all the workplaces is to assure that no such practice is avoided or go unconcerned that has marks or signs of sexual harassment. Organizational practices need to be supported via legislation to keep the moral and ethical integrity intact while assuring that the organization considers the law approved by the state (Keyton, J. and C.S. Rhodes, 1997). The organization that doesn't make efforts to minimize the disorientation created among the colleagues over the verbal misconduct themselves questions their ability of organizational policies and practices. While, presently with increased awareness over the human right, and its violation that may lead to disciplinary charges clearly states that Verbal conduct negatively impacts on the anti-harassment law (sections 2(c) acts 2010), The Code provides a guideline for the behavior of all employees, including management, and the owners of an organization to ensure a work environment free of harassment and intimidation (Dr.Anila Kamal 1998). Therefore, based on the above discussion, we proposed the below-mentioned hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Workplace harassment negatively impact on the anti-harassment laws

C. Anti-Harassment Law and Supportive Workplace Environment

Anti-harassment laws have a supportive role in maintaining a workplace where everyone feels secure and safe. A supportive work environment provides transparent and open communication, work-life balance, training and development about harassment, discrimination, recognition for hard work, and strong team spirit to its employees. However, an essential aspect of the workplace environment is the amount of care and support employees perceive to be provided by their organization as well as by their supervisor (May et al., 2004). Supportive management creates an environment of trust and safety, which encourages employees to prove their work potential without the fear of failure, increasing their commitment to the job. Hence in order to provide a supportive and healthy workplace environment for workers government has enforced zero tolerance for sexual harassment (Act 2010). This Code of anti-harassment adoption makes every organization fully in compliance with the "Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to improve the work environment of your organization so that both male and female employees can work with dignity, they can have better job satisfaction due to a civilized and respectful work environment, and can improve the productivity of the organization. Under this act management is responsible for following this Code in letter and spirit to ensure that each complaint of sexual harassment is addressed responsibly. The management is impartial in the process and has to facilitate a just and fair inquiry without retaliation. The management will not victimize the complainant or the witnesses in the case. The management needs to take the main responsibility to ensure that work environment is respectful for every employee, and if there are any complaints, the management needs to appoint a 3-member committee to look after the complaints. This anti-harassment act has sufficient access to justice it has been proved with the case of a famous Pakistan Television (PTV) anchor Tanzeela Mazhar (March-2017).

The management is required to

a) adopt the Code as part of their policies
b) Appoint a 3 member Committee with at least one woman (some members can be co-opted from outside the organization). Inform the employees of the names of the Committee members.
c) Make the Code available for the employees (give them a copy or post it on a wall).

Complaints to Ombudsperson: Any employee has the option to file a complaint either to the Inquiry Committee within an organization or the Ombudsperson. In case of filing a complaint with the Ombudsperson, the management will respond to any inquiries that the Ombudsperson might have regarding information related to the case (as per clause 10-act 2010). It will be mandatory for the management to abide by the decision of the Ombudsperson. For details on the powers and procedures that will be followed by the Ombudsperson. Previous studies and the case of Hafeez and Zahid (2021) indicate that anti-harassment laws have a positive effect on creating a safe and supportive work environment. Anti-harassment laws have a supportive role in maintaining a workplace where everyone feels secure and safe. The attributes of leaders where they play the role as a communicator, listener as well as acting strictly by the legislation and forming a close network for reporting through the anti-harassment law enhance the efficacy of operations. Previous studies note that the compliance programs and structured policy framework are well-designed under the leadership of a competent and dynamic manager or head of the organization assures the anti-harassment laws are followed and implemented in a true sense refers that cooperative leadership is the prime need for confronting the harassment to happen and this can be supported through aligning the practices by legislations (Dr. Marsha Ershaghi Hames 2021).

Hypothesis 3: Anti-harassment laws positively impact the supportive workplace environment

D. Mediating Effects of Anti-Harassment Laws

The anti-harassment law, through taking strict legal action where the harasser has to pay strict liabilities as well as is suspended from performing the responsibilities assigned, makes the workplace a trustworthy, safe, and sound environment to function. The anti-harassment law makes it prohibited to practice any form of bullying over race, color, ethnicity as well as sexual orientation (Saleem, Ali, Ashiq, & Rehman, 2021). The anti-harassment law makes it unlawful to endure any offensive acts by the work members of the organization through designing an environment that assures that any worker found doing these violent, unmoral or misconduct will be punished both by the law as well as by under the act of disrupting the integrity of the corporate culture (Sadruddin,

2013). While severe legal consequences are oriented with it but threatening the workers or using any weakness as an excuse to enjoy this harassment negatively impacts the morale as well as the attention of the workers. Therefore, the enactment of the anti-harassment law supports the behaviors of justice and helps in rebuilding the environment of a workplace that supports employee wellbeing and care (Ahmad, 2019). Non-verbal misconduct is also a major element of discussion that comes under the anti-harassment law. At the same time, non-verbal abuse leads to increased negativity and unconstructive behaviors within the team. The enactment of the law helps in reducing and minimizing the chaos that disrupts the association formed between the workers and the work engagement that support the organizational goals. Thus, anti-harassment laws positively mediate between non-verbal conduct and a supportive workplace environment

Hypothesis 4: Anti-harassment laws positively mediates between workplace harassment and a supportive workplace environment

E. Conceptual Framework

Below mentioned, figure 1 presents the comprehensive research models of this study. This model is indicating that how workplace harassment negatively affects the supportive workplace environment with the mediation effect of anti-harassment laws. In this study, workplace harassment is the independent variable, the supportive workplace environment is the dependent variable, and anti-harassment laws are mediating between the relationship of workplace harassment and supportive workplace environment.

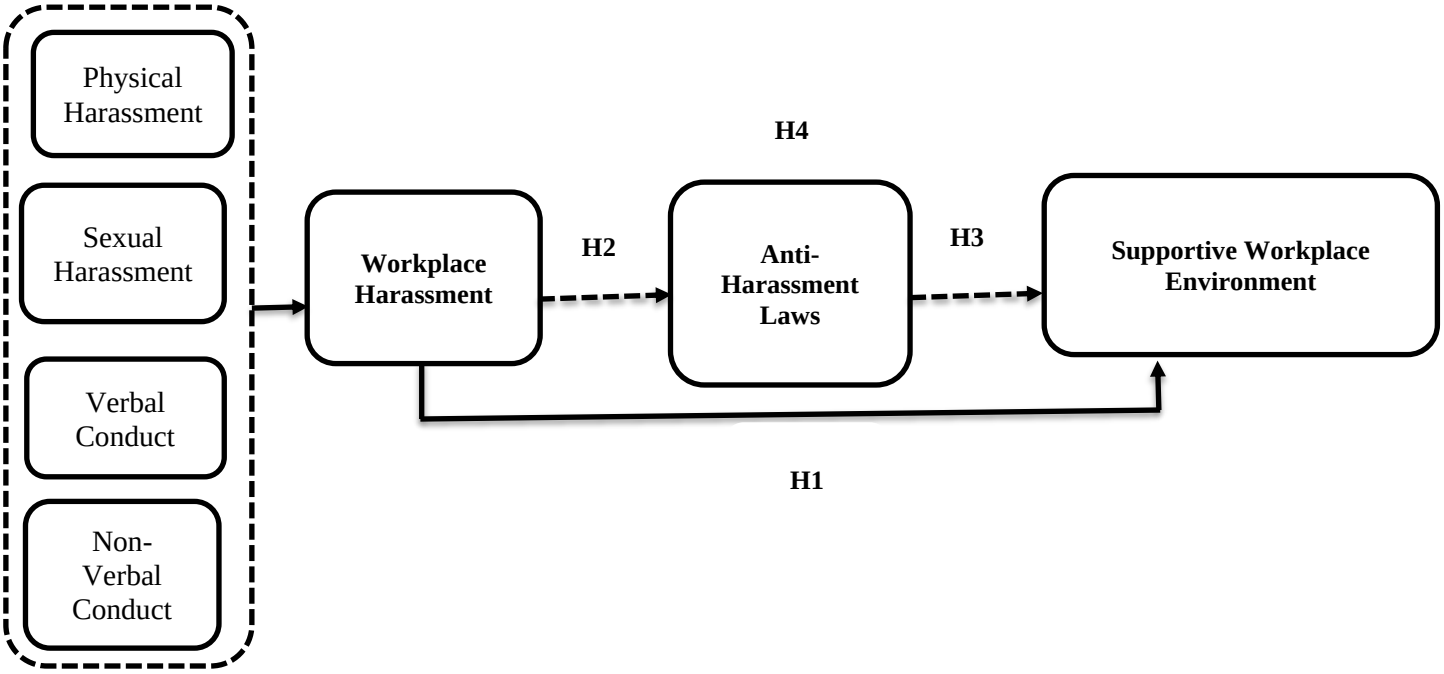

Fig 1: Proposed research model.

Note: Arrows indicate hypothesized relationship. Solid arrows suggest a direct relationship, and dashed arrows suggest an indirect relationship in the model.

IV. Research Methodology

A. Research approach

In this study, the author used the questionnaire survey approach. The questionnaire survey is a popular and extensively used research technique for quick data collection and data analysis from the target population (Heeringa, West, & Berglund, 2017; Roby, Lyons, Craig, Collis, & Visser, 2003). The survey analysis approach begins with designing a research instrument (Hennessy & Patterson, 2011). The author wants to use a questionnaire survey approach because, through this method, there is more chance of getting accurate data from a large number of respondents in a limited time frame.

B. Questionnaire Designing

To measure all latent constructs in the theoretical model, the scales used in this research will adapt from well-established prior and related literature. The instrument will state in detail with items. All the items in the latent variables will anchor at five Likert scales, i.e. from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Before data collection, the author conducted a pilot study to check the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Therefore, after a pilot study, the questionnaire will be revised as per the recommended feedback from pilot study respondents. So the revised questionnaire will distribute for data collection.

C. Variables Measurements

We used existing measures for the constructs used in this study. As mentioned before, in this study, we use a supportive workplace environment as an independent variable, a dependent variable, and anti-harassment law as a mediator. Therefore, we used five Likert scales to measure the scales. This section provides the details of scales and measurements adapted and modified from (Rasool, Wang, Zhang, & Samma, 2020; Saleem et al., 2021)

Authors used nine items to measure workplace harassment. The scales used in this research adapt by Rasool et al. (2020). Sample items are “Do you think anti-harassment laws can protect the employees’ health and dignity” and “Do you think anti-harassment laws still need to improve”. The threshold value of Cronbach's alpha is higher than or equal to 0.70. The outcomes show a 0.926 alpha value of IT competence.

We used six items to measure the supportive workplace environment. The scales used in this research adapt by Balch and Copeland (2007). Sample items are". The threshold value of Cronbach's alpha is higher than or equal to 0.70. The results show a 0.904 alpha value of the supportive workplace environment.

In this research, we used three items to measure anti-harassment laws. We adopt and modify the scale established by (Saleem et al., 2021). The items were measured on a seven-point scale "1 strongly disagrees" and "5 strongly agree". Sample items are "How do you think a supportive workplace environment helps to increase the employee's productivity" and "Do you feel comfortable asking your manager for support in sustaining a healthy work-life balance". The threshold value of Cronbach's alpha is higher than or equal to 0.70. The outcomes of this study confirmed the alpha value of anti-harassment laws is 0.901, which means the items we used to measure the anti-harassment laws is reliable and valid.

D. Sampling and Data Collocation

The data will collect from the small and medium-sized enterprises located in Pakistan. The data will collect from all sorts of senior managers, middle-level managers, and operational staff. All concerned personnel will be aware of workplace harassment, anti-harassment laws, and supportive workplace environment. A self-administrative survey approach was used to collect data. The goals of the study will have introduced to all respondents at the start of the questionnaire in the guidelines drafted; moreover, respondents will be assured of privacy for the provided responses.

E. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in four sections using descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standards deviation, measurement modeling, and structural modeling through SmartPLS (version 3.3.3). First, the demographic analysis was applied through descriptive statistics. Second, we measured the reliability and validity through measurement modeling analysis. Third, we analyzed the mean and standard deviation through descriptive analysis. Fourth, structural modeling analysis was applied to measure the direct and indirect relationships.

F. Demographics Summary

The respondent's gender difference between men and women is not too much. The male respondent ratio was around 81.28%, and the female ratio was 18.71%. Below mentioned table 1 is presenting 5-10 experience 59.06%; 10–15 years were 31.57%, and above 15 years were 9.35%. With respect to the positions, senior managers were 28.07%, middle managers were 36.54%, and operational managers were 35.38%. Most of the research participant respondents were educated. The post-graduate respondents were 22.51%, and undergraduate respondents' graduates were 59.94% and others were 17.54%.

Table 1: Demographics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	278	81.28
	Female	64	18.71
Working Experience	5–10 years	202	59.06
	10–15 years	108	31.57
	Above 15 years	32	9.35
Positions	Senior Managers	96	28.07
	Middle Level Managers	125	36.54
	Operational Managers	121	35.38
Education	Post-Graduate	77	22.51
	Undergraduate	205	59.94
	Others	60	17.54

V. Results and Analysis

Measurement Modeling

In the study, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used, owing to its close alignment with the structural equation modeling (SEM). The convergent and discriminant validity of each construct was determined through CFA to ensure the fit of the entire model. Some items were removed during this process to achieve the required levels for the scale. The 0.70 threshold value for data reliability (Hair et al., 2019) was met for all the subscales (as shown in Table 2). Although the threshold for factor loading was set at 0.60, a loading of 0.50 is considered acceptable if the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeds 0.50 (Iqbal et al., 2021b). The details has presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity

Sub-Scales	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
AHL	0.901	0.91	0.938	0.835
SWE	0.904	0.94	0.923	0.671
WH	0.926	0.956	0.938	0.628

Bootstrapping (5,000 iterations) using SmartPLS-SEM 3.3.3 was performed to examine the relationships among the variables in the theoretical model (Hair et al., 2019). We also used the partial least squares (PLS), a variance-based structural equation modeling

technique (VB-SEM), to measure the reliability and validity of the conceptual variables (the simultaneous appraisal of the measurement model) and analyze the underlying relationships hypothesized among the constructs used in the structural model (Sarstedt et al., 2017). Table 4 presents the direct effects of the WH on the SWE. It shows that the WH had a significantly negative influence on SWE ($\beta = -0.309$, $p < 0.05$), which confirmed H1. Additionally, the effect of WH on AHL ($\beta = 0\text{-}0.146$, $p < 0.05$), supported 2. Similarly, AHL had significant positive influence on SWE ($\beta = 0.819$, $p < 0.05$), so H3 was supported.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

	AHL	SWE	WH
AHL	0.814		
SWE	0.497	0.819	
WH	-0.146	-0.309	0.793

The collinearity and model fit values above in table 4 indicate that AHL SWE and WH are perfectly fitting the model because the values obtained are positive and high.

Table 4: Collinearity and Model Fit

Constructs	VIF-SWE	Model Fit	
AHL	1.022	SRMR	0.08
SWE		NFI	0.796
WH	1.022	rms Theta	0.193

The values in table 5 indicate R-square values, which are low. The value of AHL obtained is 2.1%, while for SWE it is 30.4%.

Table 5: R Square

Scales	R Square	R Square Adjusted
AHL	0.021	0.017
SWE	0.304	0.298

Descriptive Statistics The descriptive statistics for the study are presented in Table 6. For all the responses, the range of mean values is from 3.580 to 6.380, while the range of SD falls within 1.231–1.254 (as shown in Table 6).

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics

Scales	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
AHL	240	1	5	4.230	1.231
SWE	240	1	5	3.580	1.241
WH	240	1	5	6.380	1.254

To investigate the mediating effects of AHL, the study first examined the indirect effects of WH on SWE. Table 7 shows the indirect effects of WH ($\beta = 0.068$, $p < 0.05$) on the SWE, which approved H4. Similarly, (WH and AHL) and (AHL and SWE) are directly related to each other because the value of p is less than 0.05.

Table 7: Direct Relationships

Direct Relation	Coefficients	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values	Results
WH -> SWE	-0.242	-0.25	0.068	3.562	0.000	Accepted
WH -> AHL	-0.146	-0.155	0.072	2.012	0.044	Accepted
AHL -> SWE	0.462	0.464	0.07	6.641	0.000	Accepted

The values in table 8 indicate that WH, AHL, and SWE are inter-related with each other because the value of p is less than 0.05 (i.e. 0.043), hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 8: Indirect Relationship

Hypotheses	Coefficients	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values	Results
WH → AHL → SWE	0.097	0.471	0.065	1.931	0.043	Accepted

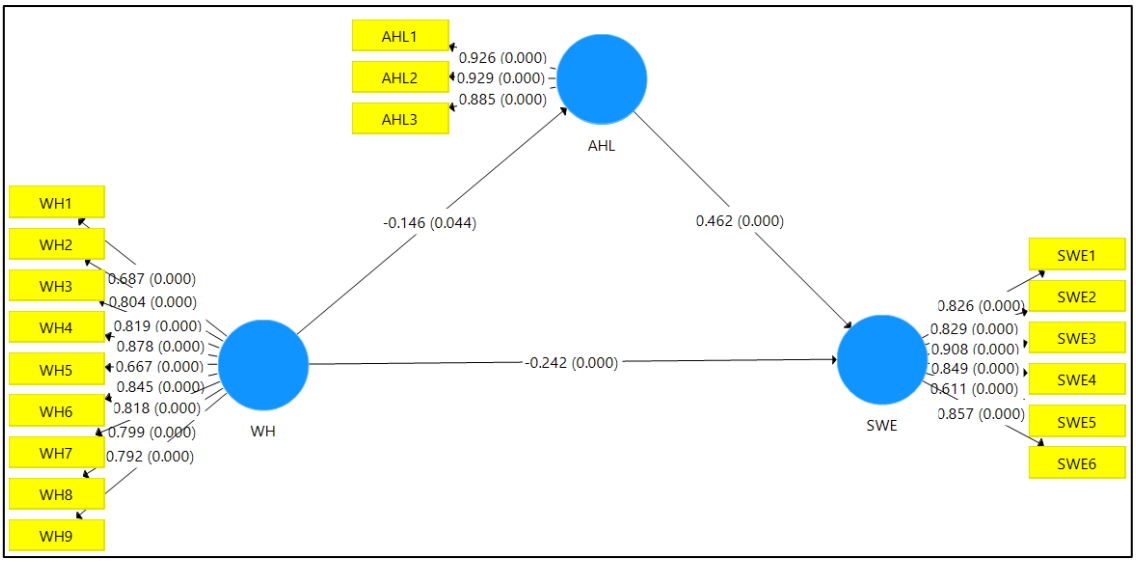

Figure 2: Structural Model

The figure above is showing the results obtained in graphical manner from Smart PLS. the values indicate that there is a positive relation between WH, AHL and SWE which verifies the results indicated in Table 8.

VI. Discussion

The selection of the most suitable Anti-harassment Laws is very important to create a Supportive workplace environment. Thus, in order to reach the target, this study focuses on: First, we identify the most important Workplace Harassment in this study, i.e., Physical harassment, sexual harassment, verbal harassment, and non-verbal harassment. Second, we investigate how these Workplace Harassments damage the supportive workplace environment. Third, we investigate the role of Anti-harassment laws mediator between the relationship of Workplace harassment (WH) and anti-harassment laws (AHL).

The findings of this study reveal that physical harassment has a negative and insignificant relationship with the Supportive workplace environment, which supports H1a, indicating that physical harassment plays an important role in damaging the Supportive workplace environment. The results of this study are supported by Carvalho and Rabechini Jr (2017), showing that physical harassment damage or negatively impacts creating a supportive workplace environment. The finding also confirms that Sexual harassment has a significant (Exceptional) relationship with a Supportive workplace environment hence supporting H1b. Previous studies indicated the same effect of sexual harassment on a supportive workplace environment in the construction industry (Ozorhon & Oral, 2017; Xu, Chan, Visscher, Zhang, & Wu, 2015). Similarly, findings of this indicated that verbal conducts are negatively and significantly affects supportive workplace environment. Gambatese and Hallowell (2011) established the relationship between verbal conducts, employee health, and a supportive workplace environment. The outcomes of this study also support H1c. In this research, the author also test the relationship between non-verbal conduct and supportive workplace environment. The outcomes demonstrate that there is a direct relationship between non-verbal conduct and supportive workplace environment, which supports the H1d. Previously, De Bakker, Boonstra, and Wortmann (2010) and Mir and Pinnington (2014), found that there are less chances of a supportive workplace environment when employees face non-verbal conduct under an organization. Thus, these outcomes support the findings of this study.

In the current research, we also test the relationship between all dimensions of workplace harassment, i.e., Physical harassment, sexual harassment, verbal harassment, non-verbal harassment, and supportive workplace harassment. The results show that workplace harassment issues can be resolved with anti-harassment law. Hwang et al. (2013) conducted a study among ten European countries; the results of their study demonstrate that the management of European organizations supports the leadership to develop and improve the leadership characters of project leaders and supported hypothesis H2a of this study. A significant relationship between sexual harassment and anti-harassment law implementation has been found. Jansen, Kostopoulos, Mihalache, and Papalexandris (2016) addressed issues related to team cohesion, team efficacy, and the bright side of leadership; the results confirmed the positive and significant relationships, which support H2b. Similarly, The findings of this study also confirm that verbal conduct can be reduced by introducing Anti-harassment law and supporting H2c. Elsaied (2019) and Stein, Vincent-Hoeper, and Gregersen (2020) expressed in their studies an effective communication and expert team enriched the supportive behavior of leaders. These findings are the same as our study and support H2c. Additionally, the results of this study intimate that non-verbal conduct also has a negative and insignificant relationship with Anti-harassment law. This insignificant is due to the reason that in renewable energy projects, basic technical knowledge is enough for the project leaders, and it is not necessary the leadership engage with the projects is fully technically expert to run the project. At the same time, we investigate the relationship between anti-harassment law and a supportive workplace environment. The findings confirm that there is a positive and significant connection between anti-harassment laws and a supportive workplace environment. Previously, Aga, Noorderhaven, and Vallejo (2016) found that to win loyalty and build an effective interpersonal relationship with employees and stakeholders, friendly leadership is very important, which ultimately affects the sustainability and performance of the project. Similarly, Howell and Wanasika (2018) presented in their study that polite, friendly, cooperative, and supportive leaders easily achieve organizational and personal goals. These findings are in line with our findings.

Lastly, in this study, Anti-harassment law was used as mediation between all types of harassment and supportive workplace harassment. The findings show that anti-harassment law positively and significantly mediates between workplace harassment and SWE, supporting H4a, H4b, and H4c. Moreover, by integrating the insights of organizational support theory and communication theory, this study also testifies to extant research studies. These theories confirm the positive and significant mediation of anti-harassment laws between the workplace harassment and SWE. However, the findings show that anti-harassment law as a mediator shows the positive and a significant indirect relationship between non- verbal conduct and SWE, which support the H4d.

There is a proportionate link between workplace harassment and a supportive work environment, because harassment inside an organization detracts from its environment's degree of support. Safety and trust have been destroyed, which has a direct effect on employee performance, which in turn has an effect on a firm's competitiveness in its relevant market. The resource-based view (RBV) hypothesis directs a firm's resources toward achieving better performance; moreover, it may help establish a competitive advantage for intangible assets such as a safe and healthy work environment for workers. On the other hand, the knowledge-based view (KBV) theory is concerned with organizational learning management and provides businesses with solutions for achieving a competitive advantage. As assistance inside the firm's environment is a critical component, businesses must place a premium on it when using RBV and KBV theories. Which ultimately arises about the working environment on time, and so by eliminating it, the workplace environment becomes helpful, thus sketching out a competitive edge.

The connection between workplace harassment and anti-harassment legislation is substantially stronger. When implemented appropriately, anti-harassment legislation has a significant impact on workplace harassment in terms of both escalation and decrease. If a company adheres to anti-harassment laws effectively and imposes legal sanctions on violators on its grounds, workplace harassment will be avoided. The RBV hypothesis directs a firm's resources toward achieving higher performance in order to gain a competitive edge. Human capital is acknowledged as the company's primary asset, assisting the business in achieving a competitive advantage. When a business perceives danger in the form of harassment, it is impossible for it to acquire a competitive advantage in the relevant market. To do this, businesses must design an effective anti-harassment policy and complaint mechanism that assists workers who are confronted with this problem.

The anti-harassment statute and a friendly work environment are inextricably linked. The anti-harassment legislation assists employers in creating a supportive work environment for their workers. The RBV hypothesis directs a firm's resources toward achieving greater performance in order to gain a competitive advantage. When a business effectively enforces anti-harassment laws with sanctioned behavior, workers feel secure, respected, and establishes confidence in the organization, which not only supports in its development but also helps build its reputation in the relevant market. This generates a competitive advantage for the firm by ensuring the safety and security of its human resources. Employee resources may examine the suitable talent landscape and regulate the most matched remuneration approach with corporate objectives. Management may utilize employee data to pick skill sets that grow over time.

The anti-harassment law's mediation role in the link between workplace harassment and a supportive work environment is far more robust. On the one hand, anti-harassment legislation has a direct correlation with workplace harassment; on the other hand, anti-harassment legislation also has a significant correlation with a supportive work environment. When a company's employees feel safe, secure, and appreciated as a result of the enforcement of anti-harassment laws in the workplace, they execute their jobs with increased motivation and devotion, as well as a sense of loyalty to the firm. The RBV hypothesis directs a firm's resources toward achieving greater performance in order to gain a competitive advantage. Human capital is acknowledged as the company's primary asset, assisting the business in achieving a competitive advantage. Three of these have a mediating influence on one another, assisting businesses in becoming the best in the market while maintaining a competitive edge.

VII. Conclusion and Limitations

A. Conclusion

The issue that is selected is sexual and physical harassment. Although sexual harassment used to be seen as a largely condoned component of professional life, it is now widely recognized as an occupational danger that women should be prepared for. The influx of large numbers of women into the paid labor force over the last 20 years, as well as their increasing involvement in worker's organizations and women's advocacy groups, has raised awareness of the extent and debilitating consequences of sexual harassment on a professional and personal level. Women have revealed it as insulting and destructive, and as a result, the conduct has been redefined. If workplace harassment occurs in an organization, it becomes difficult for the organizations to encourage a collaboration-based work environment resulting in a bad image of the company.

This study concludes the government must lunched anti-harassment laws that contribute to a welcoming culture where everyone feels they are valuable team members and also attract talented job applicants. Every SMEs must hold the workplace harassment policy, and in this Policy should consist on the below-mentioned points:

(1) SMEs clearly define harassment
(2) State that harassment is not tolerated.
(3) Explain the harassment reporting system with a designated human resource department for reporting claims.
(4) Communicate the disciplinary consequences of harassment.
(5) Outline the investigation and remediation process.
(6) State that retaliation against employees reporting harassment is prohibited.
(7) State the punishment against workplace harassment.

Employers must hold employees, and themselves, to high standards. Everyone deserves a workplace free from harmful harassment, and all employees should be expected to behave like professional adults while on the job. Not only could workplace harassment lead to expensive lawsuits, it creates a toxic culture that cripples team cohesion and harms productivity.

B. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has some limitations and future research directions. Based on these findings, the results may not be generalized, as the authors believe that there are certain limitations. (1) The sample size of this study is limited. (2) Due to the selection of data collection, genders are not evenly distributed. The targeted population for data selection had more male than female personnel. The authors believe that with just drafted limitations, the results cannot be generalized and readers should consider these limitations before recognizing the analyzed results. Future research efforts could increase the sample size and target evenly distributed respondents from the perspective of gender. (3) This research was purely based on respondents' views about workplace harassment, ignoring demographic specifications such as gender, age, education, race, etc. Since this was a first-time effort on such a sample for particular research variables, future research would be needed to highlight gender (male-specific) harassment issues. (4) The workplace stress taken as a mediator in this research is limited and is not operationalized with further stress dimension. Future research may explore more thoughtful dimensions such as burnout, work-family balance, or many more to generate insights for academicians and practitioners. Furthermore, the authors believe that workers' wellbeing plays a vital role in improving their productivity, and it also reduces the toxic workplace environment. Hence, future research efforts could incorporate more determinants of workers' wellbeing to find new insights. Future research could also explore insights about workplace culture characterized by inherent values, sense of workplace safety, violence reduction, and behavioral mechanisms (such as policies and procedures) to address workplace toxicity.

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