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WOMEN'S VIEWS ON THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

By

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A Research Report submitted to the

Department of Social Work School of Human and Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Johannesburg

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Occupational Social Work

February 2010

Declaration

I, Patricia Kariaga, declare that this thesis is my own unaided work, except for technical assistance as detailed in the Acknowledgements, that I am responsible for the text of this study and all conclusions reached, and that no other part of this thesis has been submitted for a degree at any other university.

_____ _____

Patricia Kariaga Date

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents; my mother, Dr. Mary Goretti Kariaga and my father, Prof. Billy M. M. Kariaga who through their example of their love and dedication for academia inspired me to start and complete this thesis. I also dedicate this thesis to my helpers (you know who you are. Words will never be enough to express the gratitude I feel for what you have done for me).

Acknowledgements

My sincerest gratitude goes to the following people:

- All the participants of this study because of whom women's views on the causes and consequences of sexual harassment were understood. Without these giving women this research would not have been possible.

- Barclays, Standard Chattered and Stanbic banks of Harare who allowed this research to be conducted at their workplaces. Their openness and transparent attitude towards research and constructive criticism will enable many organisations that wish to use this research to improve their sexual harassment policies and administration.

- To University of the Witwatersrand for the opportunity to have this masters degree and for financial aid through the Merit Award in my coursework year. This has been my most maturing experience for which I am indebted to the institution.

- My supervisor, Francine Masson for her hard work, tolerance, guidance and so much support throughout the years. Despite her hectic schedule she always made time for me and helped me to grow in my writing. For this I am so grateful.

- The volunteer social worker, Fadzai Chapawanasa, who out of her own time and love provided counselling to participants for free.

- My parents for financial support in my education since my kindergarten years; especially my mother who started a kindergarten where none existed so that I would go to school and my father who at crucial stages in my academic transition used his assertiveness to ensure I got the education I deserved particularly at grade 2 entry level in a new school, and undergraduate entry to study social work. I would never have reached this point without such rare dedication.

- My brothers and sisters Jeff Anthony and Steven Riaga , Stephen Riaga (Abacha), Tony, Tracy and Sheila Kariaga and the entire extended family for their patience and support as they allowed me to complete this research.

- Charles Oricho, my beloved, who through his own example of hard work and commitment to his own Masters degree provided great inspiration.

- Alex Odago a family friend who through moral support, kept pushing for this research to be completed; and all my friends and loved ones. Thank you and God bless you all.

Abstract

Despite the high prevalence of sexual harassment and the important role which occupational social workers can play in this area, few of these professionals are directly involved in this area at various workplaces in Zimbabwe, where the rate of human rights abuses affecting not just women but the entire population is very high.

The aims of this study were to investigate what female employees in the three international banks situated in Harare's CBD (Barclays, Standard Chattered and Stanbic) view as the causes and consequences of sexual harassment and to find out the differences and similarities in their views on the causes and consequences of sexual harassment at the three banks.

An interview schedule was administered personally by the researcher to 63 respondents working at Stanbic, Barclays and Standard Chattered Banks. Questions pertaining to women's views and their experiences of sexual harassment were asked using a guideline from the Multi-Perspective Framework of sexual harassment by Tata and Bowes-Sperry in Powell (1999).

Results indicated that there was a high prevalence of sexually harassing behaviour. Culture and tradition were found to be the major causes of sexual harassment at the workplace while the main consequence of sexual harassment was found to be the integration of women and men at the workplace. Women may have over time been gravely affected by sexual harassment as close to a fifth of the participants had to receive counselling from the volunteer social worker after their interviews.

Results also indicated that the most sexual harassment occurred at Stanbic bank where there was no sexual harassment policy in place indicating the relevance of sexual harassment policies for any organisation. Both Standard Chattered and Barclays banks, despite having clear policies on sexual harassment, had not trained their employees on these policies. It was also discovered that women were not aware of the existence of sexual harassment policies in banks where they were in place. In addition, they were not aware of the National Law on sexual harassment or its existence, emphasising the importance of appropriate government and non-governmental bodies training the nation on gender sensitive laws.

The intention of the research was to help address policy shortfalls in the banks and enhance knowledge on sexual harassment among employees.

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